

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 TRSE-00 SAI-01 IO-14 DRC-01 OMB-01

/136 W

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R 121605Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4126

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

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USDOCOSOUTH

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY ROME

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 4433

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CY, TU, GR

SUBJECT: THE ROOTS OF GREEK ATTITUDES IN CURRENT CONFRONTATION
BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY

MILITARY ADDRESSEES FOR POLADS

1. SUMMARY. GREEK ATTITUDES EXPRESSED IN THE CURRENT
CONFRONTATION WITH TURKEY CAN BE FULLY APPRECIATED ONLY AGAINST
THE FULL HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GREEK/TURKISH RELATIONS AND THE
NATURE OF HELLENISM. AGAINST THAT BACKGROUND, GREECE'S ASSOCIATION
WITH TURKEY IN THE NATO ALLIANCE IS ALMOST "UNNATURAL," GIVEN
THE TRADITION OF SUSPICION, DISTRUST AND FEAR WITH WHICH THE
GREEKS CUSTOMARILY VIEW THEIR ANATOLIAN NEIGHBORS. THIS MORE

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"NATURAL" VIEW OF TURKEY IS PROJECTED EXTREMELY SHARPLY NOW BY

GREEK SPOKESMAN AS A RESULT OF THE CONGRUENCE OF SEVERAL HIGHLY EMOTIONAL AND SUBSTANTIVE SETS OF BILATERAL PROBLEMS, E.G. AEGEAN OIL, CYPRUS, MINORITIES. IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT ALL INTERESTED PARTIES RECOGNIZE THE DEPTH AND GRAVITY OF THE GREEK-TURKISH CONFRONTATION EMERGING FROM THESE OPPOSING INTERESTS AND ESPECIALLY THE ABSOLUTE SERIOUSNESS WHICH THE GREEK SIDE ATTACHES TO THEIR RESOLUTION. SINCE BOTH ANTAGONISTS ARE NATO ALLIES GUARDING THE VITAL SOUTHEASTERN FLANK OF THE ALLIANCE, IT SEEMS ADVISABLE THAT BOTH THE U.S. AND NATO PREPARE NOW TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN A TIMELY AND APPROPRIATE FASHION WITH A VIEW TOWARD DEFUSING--IF NOT RESOLVING--THIS POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE AND DISRUPTIVE INTERNECINE QUARREL. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING RECENT MONTHS, RELATIONS BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY HAVE DETERIORATED SO SHARPLY THAT THE CURRENT STANCE OF THE ONE VIS-A-VIS THE OTHER CAN ONLY BE DEFINED AS CONSTITUTING CONFRONTATION. VARIOUS ELEMENTS, EACH EMOTIONALLY CHARGED AND SUBSTANTIVE IN NATURE, HAVE MERGED TO CONSTITUTE ONE OVERWHELMING IMPEDIMENT TO PEACEFUL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO STATES. OF THESE FACTORS, THE TWO MOST DRAMATIC ARE AEGEAN OIL AND CYPRUS. CLOSE ON THE HEELS OF THESE PRIME CONTROVERSIES ARE THE QUESTIONS OF MINORITIES AND NATO COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS. A BRIEF REVIEW IS USEFUL.

(A) COMMENCING IN FEBRUARY THIS YEAR, THE GREEK GOVERNMENT-- AND TO A LARGE DEGREE THE GREEK PEOPLE--HAVE BEEN EXERCISED BY TURKISH CLAIMS TO EXPLORATION RIGHTS IN AEGEAN CONTINENTAL SHELF AREAS WHICH GREEKS ALLEGE TENACIOUSLY AND UNCATEGORICALLY BELONG TO THEM. WHILE PETROLEUM ALONE IN THESE DAYS OF "ENERGY CRISIS" WOULD BE A SUFFICIENT FACTOR TO PROVOKE GREEK PROPRIETARY ATTITUDES, THE CURRENT TURKISH CLAIMS ARE VIEWED IN GREEK EYES AS NOT JUST AIMED AT OIL ACQUISITION BUT RATHER AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD TERRITORIAL EXPANSION. SIMILARLY, THE INCREASED TURMOIL ON CYPRUS IN THE PAST HALF YEAR--E.G. DEATH OF GRIVAS, SUSPENSION OF INTERCOMMUNAL TALKS, EOKA-B ACTIVITY, MAKARIOS ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GREEK REGIME--SERVE TO HEIGHTEN GREEK FEARS THAT TURKEY MIGHT BENEFIT FROM THE ISLAND'S CONFUSION TO THE DETRIMENT OF ITS OWN LEGITIMATE INTERESTS. IN GREEK EYES TURKEY'S CONSISTENT REFUSAL TO PERMIT THE EXERCISE BY THE CYPRIOT PEOPLE OF THE RIGHT OF SELF-DETERMINATION (82 PERCENT ARE GREEK,

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BELONGING UNEQUIVOCALLY "TO THE GREEK NATION") IS A CONTINUALLY FESTERING SORE.

(B) AS IF THE ABOVE PROBLEMS "ARE NOT ENOUGH," THE GREEKS ARE BITTER OVER TURKEY'S HARASSMENT OF ITS RESIDENT GREEK POPULATION AND ITS CONTINUAL EFFORTS TO INDUCE A GREEK EXODUS FROM TURKEY, SPECIFICALLY NOTING IN THIS REGARD THE MARKED DECLINE OF GREEK POPULATIONS IN ISTANBUL, TENEDOS AND IMBROS. AS A COROLLARY

CONCERN, GREEKS RESENT DEEPLY THE DENIGRATION WHICH HAS OCCURRED IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE GREEK PATRIARCHATE IN ISTANBUL. AGGRAVATING FURTHER THEIR DEEP FEELINGS ON THIS SUBJECT IS THE PERSISTENT STREAM OF COMPLAINTS WHICH THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT ISSUES REGARDING THE GENERALLY INTACT TURKISH MINORITY IN WESTERN THRACE, COMPLAINTS WHICH GREEKS VIEW AS A HARBINGER OF AN ULTIMATE TURKISH INTENTION TO EXPAND ITS FRONTIERS IN THE NORTH TO ABSORB THIS TURKISH MINORITY.

(C) FINALLY, THE PERSISTENT EFFORTS OF TURKEY--CONTINUING TO THE PRESENT--TO ALTER THE NATO NAVAL COMMAND BOUNDARIES AS A MEANS OF UNDERCUTTING GREECE'S RIGHT TO EXCLUSIVE CONTROL OF THE AEGEAN APPEARS TO MANY GREEKS AS A TURKISH EFFORT DIRECTED TOWARD WESTWARD EXPANSION WITH AN ULTIMATE AIM OF ABSORBING GREEK ISLANDS LYING OFF THE WESTERN COAST OF TURKEY.

3. WITH THESE CURRENT PROBLEMS AS POINTS OF DEPARTURE, PRESIDENT GHIZIKIS AND GENERAL IOANNIDES MAY BE CORRECT WHEN THEY STATE THAT WHILE THEIR REGIME MAY NOT BE POPULAR, THE GREEK PEOPLE WILL UNITE AND SUPPORT IT IN ANY CONFRONTATION WITH TURKEY. THE REASON LIES IN THE HISTORY OF THE GREEK NATION, WHICH OVER MANY CENTURIES SURVIVED INTACT, UNITED IN HELLENISM AND THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, DESPITE HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF OTTOMAN DOMINATION AND SUBJUGATION. GREEKS ARE A TOUGH, WELL-TEMPERED, AND DETERMINED PEOPLE, ALMOST ANARCHISTIC IN THEIR CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL, WITH THE DOMINANCE OF THE FAMILY AS THE FOCUS OF VALUES AND BEHAVIOR PATTERN, BUT CAPABLE OF EXTRAORDINARY UNITY AND SACRIFICE WHEN ACTING AT A NATIONAL LEVEL.

4. FOR GREEKS WHOSE HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS GOES BACK MILLENNIA, THE ALLIANCE WITH TURKEY IS A VERY RECENT PHENOMENON INDEED, FULL OF SUSPICIOUS AROMAS AND HAVING AN AIR OF TENUOUSNESS. IN THIS HISTORICAL SETTING THE ALLIANCE IS ALMOST UNSECRET

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NATURAL, FOR TURKEY IS ASSOCIATED IN THE GREEK MIND WITH SUBJUGATION, SLAVERY, HARDSHIP AND THE STRUGGLE TO SURVIVE. THE DAY "CONSTANTINOPLE" FELL--TUESDAY--IS STILL CONSIDERED AN UNLUCKY DAY FOR BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS. GREEKS REGARD THE FOUR CENTURIES OF TURKISH OCCUPATION AS A PERIOD OF NEGATION AND SUFFERING AND THE MAJOR FACTOR IN GREECE'S CULTURAL LAG BEHIND WESTERN EUROPE. IT MISSED THE ENLIGHTENING INFLUENCE OF THE RENAISSANCE, REMAINING THUS INVARIABLY DEFENSIVE, MYSTICAL AND SOMETIMES REVEALING DEEP TRAITS OF OBSCURANTISM. IOANNIDES SAID, IN EFFECT, LAST SPRING THAT IF IT COMES TO A SHOWDOWN WITH TURKEY, GREEKS WILL AVENGE 400 YEARS OF OPPRESSIVE OCCUPATION.

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5. CONTRARY TO THE WISHES OF THE DOMINANT POWERS OF THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA, THE GREEK NATION FORCED THE GREAT POWERS TO RECOGNIZE ITS INDEPENDENCE, LONG BEFORE THE TUMULTUOUS MOVEMENTS TOWARDS FREEDOM AND UNITY CHARACTERIZING LATER DECADES IN THE 19TH CENTURY. THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE WAS MARKED BY MASSACRE AND OPPRESSION--E.G. THE PUBLIC HANGING IN CONSTANTINOPOLE OF THE GREEK PATRIARCH (GRIGORIOS PEMPTOS) AND THE MASSACRE OF CHIOS CELEBRATED BY DELACROIX IN HIS GREAT PAINTING OF THE SUBJECT. EVERY AREA OF GREECE CHERISHES ITS HEROES FROM THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE OTTOMANS, INCLUDING THE PUBLIC MEMORIALS OF NEATLY STACKED BONES IN THE CHARNEL HOUSES ON CRETE AND CHIOS.

6. IN SPITE OF THE PARTLY AMBIGUOUS CHARACTER OF GREEK PARTICIPATION IN WORLD WAR I THEY COUNTED THEMSELVES AMONG THE ALLIES. RECOGNITION OF THEIR HISTORICAL RIGHTS AND MILITARY

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VICTORY ESTABLISHED IN THE NEVER-RATIFIED TREATY OF SEVRES, WERE SUBSEQUENTLY SWEEPED AWAY BY THE EVENTS OF 1922, CULMINATING IN THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE WHICH FORCED OVER A MILLION GREEKS OUT OF AN AREA THEY HAD LIVED IN FOR SEVERAL THOUSAND YEARS AND WHICH WAS FAMOUS AS PART OF HELLENIC GREECE. THIS HUMILIATION LEFT DEEP SCARS, AND THE PROBLEM OF ABSORBING THE REFUGEE POPULATION CONTINUED TO PLAGUE THE GREEK NATION THROUGHOUT THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED. THEIR UNSATISFIED GRIEVANCES MADE THE REFUGEES FERTILE GROUND FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND STRENGTHENING OF GREEK COMMUNISM, CULMINATING IN THE BLOODY CIVIL STRIFE OF THE FORTIES. THE GREEKS REMEMBER WELL THAT TURKEY STAYED OUT OF WORLD WAR II, WATCHED GREECE OCCUPIED BY THE NAZIS AND REDUCED TO STARVATION, AND BELATEDLY DECLARED THEIR BELLIGERENCY, CONTRIBUTING NOTHING TO ALLIED VICTORY. THUS THEY HAVE LESS CONFIDENCE IN TURKEY AS A NATO ALLY THAN IN OTHER NATO COUNTRIES BECAUSE, BASED UPON THEIR PAST EXPERIENCE, THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THE ALLIES CAN COUNT UPON TURKEY.

7. MORE ENLIGHTENED GREEKS FULLY REALISE THEY MUST LIVE WITH TURKEY AND THE TURKS AS NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS. THUS THEY RECALL WITH APPROVAL THE GREAT EFFORT OF BROTHERLY RECONCILIATION OF THE TWO GREAT 20TH CENTURY LEADERS OF THESE COUNTRIES -- KEMAL ATATURK AND ELEFTHERIOS VENIZELOS. PAPADOPOULOS AND MARKEZINIS WERE BOTH WEDDED TO PRINCIPLES OF RECONCILIATION AND ATTACHED HIGH PRIORITY TO GREEK-TURKISH FRIENDSHIP. BUT IT HAS NEVER HAD MUCH DEPTH AND HAS CONSTITUTED A DELICATE FLOWER TO BE CAREFULLY NURTURED.

8. THOSE QUESTIONING THIS RECONCILIATION BELIEVE THE TURKS TO BE INSINCERE, AND, IN FACT, PROVOCATIVE. THEY BELIEVE THE TURKS HAVE NEVER LOST THEIR FEELINGS OF SUPERIORITY OVER NOR THEIR DESIRE TO DOMINATE THE GREEK PEOPLE. THEY CITE THE CURRENT PROBLEMS DESCRIBED IN PARA 2 TO SUPPORT THEIR CASE.

9. TO THE GREEKS, ALL OF THE FOREGOING APPEAR AS DEEPLY THREATENING THE INTEGRITY OF THE GREEK NATION. THEY REGARD THE OIL EXPLORATION PROBLEM AS ONLY ONE STEP IN A LONG SEQUENCE OF TURKISH EFFORTS TO EXPAND TURKEY'S FRONTIERS WESTWARD, THE ISLANDS BEING THE IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE BUT THE THREAT TO GREEK THRACE NOT TO BE OVERLOOKED. FOR THESE REASONS, GOVERNMENTS OF GREECE, WHATEVER THEIR ORIGIN OR ORIENTATION, AND THE GREEK PEOPLE ARE
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LIKELY TO UNITE STRONGLY IF TURKEY ENGAGES IN ANY PROVOCATIVE ACT. IT IS AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND THAT OBSERVERS MUST VIEW THE GREEK MILITARY INTENTION TO REPLY WITH FORCE IF TURKEY SEEKS TO BEGIN PETROLEUM DRILLING OPERATIONS IN THE DISPUTED AREAS. THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THEIR SINCERITY. HISTORY SHOWS THE GREEKS

CAN BE DETERMINED TO THE POINT OF IRRATIONALITY--THEY WILL "THROW EVERYTHING IN" EVEN IF THEY THINK THE ODDS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY AGAINST THEM. THE FACT THAT OIL IS INVOLVED IS NOT THE GOVERNING FACTOR, BUT IT DOES EXACERBATE VERY SERIOUSLY THE UNDERLYING PROBLEMS, SINCE GREEKS SEE PETROLEUM AS A GREAT NEW NATIONAL ASSET GIVING THEIR COUNTRY THE POSSIBILITY, PREVIOUSLY UNDREAMED OF, FOR RAPID NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THE EXISTING WORLD OIL CRISIS HIGHLIGHTS THE FACT IN THE STARKEST FASHION.

10. I REALIZE FULLY THE IMPACT UPON OUR INFLUENCE IN TURKEY OF THE TURKISH POPPY DECISION. SHOULD CONGRESS CUT OFF MILITARY AID, IT WOULD SEEM FROM HERE TO CONSTITUTE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD, SINCE WE DO HAVE VITAL INTERESTS IN TURKEY, IN GREECE AND IN SOUND ALLIED RELATIONS BETWEEN THESE TWO COUNTRIES. BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS THE MILITARY OF THESE TWO COUNTRIES ALSO HAVE TO CONSIDER THEIR FUTURE AND THAT OF THEIR COUNTRIES IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CLASHES. THE FUTURE INTERNAL POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OF BOTH COUNTRIES IN RELATION TO THEIR MILITARY COULD BE VITALLY AFFECTED. THEY HAVE, THEREFORE, A VERY BASIC INTEREST IN AVOIDING ARMED CLASHES WHICH WOULD IN ADDITION TO THE INTERNAL IMPACTS ONLY BENEFIT THEIR ENEMIES, INCLUDING AMONG OTHERS THE SOVIET UNION AND POLITICALLY AGGRESSIVE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNISM.

11. CONCLUSION. IN DEALING WITH THIS SERIOUS THREAT TO STABILITY IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN AND THE INTEGRITY OF THE SOUTHERN FLANK OF NATO, WE SHALL HAVE TO BEAR IN MIND THE VERY DEEP ROOTS UNDERLYING PRESENT GREEK-TURKISH DIFFERENCES. WE SHOULD OF COURSE CONTINUE TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE BILATERALLY, IN CONJUNCTION WITH OUR NATO ALLIES, AND THROUGH THE NATO MECHANISM TO DISCOURAGE PROVOCATIVE ACTS BY EITHER SIDE. BUT MORE IMPORTANT, WE MUST STEP UP OUR EFFORTS TO GET THE TWO COUNTRIES TALKING TO EACH OTHER. BECAUSE THE SITUATION IS NOT NOW AMENABLE TO SOLUTION THROUGH OUR BILATERAL EFFORTS, I SUGGEST WE CONSIDER HOW WE MIGHT STIMULATE MORE MEANINGFUL EFFORTS WITHIN THE NATO STRUCTURE, PARTICULARLY THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS, TO LOWER THE LEVEL OF TENSION AND BRING ABOUT NEGOTIATION OF GREEK-
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TURKISH DIFFERENCES. BOTH GOVERNMENTS ARE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THEIR MILITARY, AND CLASHES CAN BE AVOIDED IF THE LEADERSHIP OF MILITARY FORCES OF BOTH COUNTRIES ARE SO DETERMINED. IT IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN THE CASE OF GREECE THAT THE MILITARY LEADERSHIP WILL PLAY THE DECISIVE ROLE IN DETERMINING GREECE'S ULTIMATE COURSE OF ACTION VIS-A-VIS TURKEY AND, BECAUSE OF THIS REALITY, BOTH THE USG AND NATO FOCUS MUST BE CENTERED ON THIS POWER SOURCE. ONE SPECIAL CAVEAT WHICH THE USG MUST BEAR IN MIND IN THIS CONTEXT IS THAT BOTH GREECE AND TURKEY HAVE A PRE-
DISPOSITION TO ASSUME THAT THEY WILL BE SAVED FROM THEIR OWN EXCESSES BY THE UNITED STATES. THEIR ASSUMPTION IS THAT EVEN SHOULD A MILITARY CLASH COMMENCE BETWEEN THEIR ARMED FORCES,

THE U.S. WOULD INTERVENE VERY QUICKLY IN ORDER TO DISENGAGE ITS
NATO ALLIES. SUCH AN ASSUMPTION CAN ACTUALLY CONSTITUTE AN
IMPETUS TOWARDS ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM IN THAT THEY FULLY
EXPECT A U.S. "DEUS EX MACHINA" TO EMERGE FROM THE WINGS AND
RESCUE THEM BEFORE THE BLOOD-LETTING BECOMES SERIOUS.
ACCORDINGLY, THE U.S. MUST DISABUSE BOTH SIDES OF THIS
ASSUMPTION AND ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE EACH GOVERNMENT THAT IT WILL
BE HELD FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR AND MUST LIVE WITH ANY CHAIN OF
EVENTS WHICH ITS POLICIES MIGHT PROVOKE. WE MUST AIM TOWARDS
CONVINCING BOTH GOVERNMENTS THAT THE HIGHEST INTEREST OF EACH
DEMAND A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF THEIR DIFFICULTIES AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, NATIONALISM, CONTINENTAL SHELF, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, POLITICAL SITUATION, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 JUL 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974ATHENS04433
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740187-0178
From: ATHENS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740755/aaaabuzv.tel
Line Count: 344
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAR 2002 by izenbei0>; APPROVED <13 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE ROOTS OF GREEK ATTITUDES IN CURRENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN GREECE AND TURKEY
TAGS: PFOR, CY, TU, GR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005